grabb.

no 21

20. Febr. 169 4/5.

The Argument and Reasons of the Brethren of Trinity-house, *touching the Breach in the Level near* Purfleet *in* Essex, *whereby the River of* Thames *is much Damnify'd, and the Navigation thereof greatly obstructed, and in danger of being wholly destroy'd.*

THat the Cause which produc'd the said Breach, was not from the weakness of the Sea-Banks, defect of Sluces, or want of care in the Proprietors of the Land to preserve their defences against the Incroachments and Inundations of the River, in which Reach the Tydes are very rapid, and the weather often so dangerous, that for their own safety-sake, they are forced to be more on their guard than other People; wherefore they keep their Sea-banks in better repair and are at a greater expence to secure their Land on that Level than most others. If this misfortune had befallen them through any neglect or default of theirs, why did not the Commissioners of Sewers foresee the Danger by their Surveyors, and direct timely remedy? Or the Water-Bayliffs, who are the Conservator's Instruments, discover the growing evil, and Caution the Proprietors before it was to late; for defects of that kind increase by degrees, and for the most part give warning enough before the mischief happens. But neither the Commissioners of Sewers, who are very regular in their Surveys and severe in their Injunctions, nor the Water-Bayliffs, who are the Conservator's Officers, and are so very sharp and mindful of their Business, that Complaints are often made of their double diligence, are in fault, so that it cannot be presum'd that they had in any thing neglected their duty; nor the Proprietors, whose interest it is to preserve their own Estates by keeping the Banks in good repair, are in the least degree chargeable, because it hath been prov'd, that tho they had all contributed their utmost joynt Care and Forces in their several stations to have prevented it, this great disaster had in all moral Probability notwithstanding happened: In as much as no humane foresight or wisdom can obviate a mischief that has never at any time before fallen out; (and such was this Inundation) for tho the Banks of this Level were of a competent height, such as that no objection was ever made to them, nor any Experience or Observation from any Tydes or Weather, (in the memory of Man) has at any time heretofore been observed, to give them jealousie; yet it pleas'd God to permit at that time such a Deluge and swell of a Tyde, as surmounted by many feet the Tops of the said Banks, and (not as hath been untruly objected) Broken them down through any neglect of those whose duty it was to have kept them in better repair. This Deluge, then filling the Level, was by the Banks that were designed to keep the water out, made a deep standing Lake of water, which had no way to issue back or discharge it self but by forcing out the Banks that kept it in, which upon the coming of the Ebb, and falling away of the Tide came to Pass; that great weight of water so confin'd, at length bursting out where the Breach now is, which was the Cause and the only Occation of the damage to the River, and to those Gentlemen who are the sufferers, and who now humbly apply for redress to that Authority from which alone they can justly hope for Succour.

People

People who are undone by Fire and Conflagrations are the objects of Parliamentary Care, and are constantly heard and relieved; this Calamity was the hand of God, and no humane Power cou'd have prevented it: Fire and water are mercileſs Enemies, and the ſufferers by the one ſeem to challenge as much right to compaſſion from the Publick as the other.

If the Remedy of the damage which the River of *Thames* has ſuſtained, and the Navigation thereof by this Breach (which is only a Conſequence and Coincidence of the Deluge and Inundation of this Level) ſhou'd be deemed chargeable on the Proprietors of the Land, while perhaps they might be able to drain the ſame for their own Private uſe, by methods that will come by two third parts cheaper than thoſe that are propoſed, and found neceſſary for the Rivers better conſervation. If this ſhould be their Sentence, I ſay, it would ſeem very grievous, and no body in time will think Land on the *Thames* Level worth the holding, and it may come to paſs, that by a few ſuch Preſidents the Banks will be totally neglected, and the River conſequently ſwallowed up and loſt in the ſaid Level. For as by taking this Land heretofore out of the *Thames* (which is all under High-water mark) the Channel was at firſt begotten, and Navigation obtain'd, ſo by loſing it to the River again, the depth of Water and the Navigation will be loſt.

It was therefore their Opinion, That the Proprietors of the Level will be charg'd very ſufficiently, if over and above the money they have been already out of Purſe, amounting to at leaſt 3200 *l.* together with the loſs of their Land for many years to come after it ſhall be drain'd, if the ſaid proprietors be further made lyable to reſtore and ſecure their own Sea-banks: while the repair of the main Breach which brings a National profit ſeems to call for a National expence; in as much as that for the ſake of the Rivers conſervation only that work is deſign'd, and forasmuch alſo as it requires an expence by many degrees Superiour to what may be computed ſimply neceſſary for the draining the Level. The charge of this Work therefore, which is to obtain a publick benefit, and is foreign to the uſes of drayning the Land ſeems to call for publick Compaſſion, and to require a publick Purſe to Compaſs. And not only a publick Purſe, but publick Care too, leaſt by bold and unexperienc'd Undertakers, who cannot poſſibly make a due judgment of the difficulty and danger of ſuch Works, the Nation, by a propoſal of ſaving a little Money (which works of this kind will by no means ſuffer) may chance to incurr a much greater Expence by the loſs of all their Labour and Charge: The undertaking thereby being render'd much more difficult and expenſive than at firſt, and the River of *Thames* damnified a new by the miſcarriage of ſuch ſlight and ineffectual projects, in as much as all the matter whereof their Defences are to be compos'd, muſt neceſſarily, in caſe of any diſaſter, be driven by the force of the water into the Channel.